

SELFREDGE FIELD, BUILDING NO. 178
(Theater No. 2)
(Base Reproduction Plant)
E. side of Wagner St., south of George Ave.
Mt. Clemens vicinity
Macomb County
Michigan

HAER No. MI-116-S

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Great Lakes Systems Office
Department of the Interior
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, NE 68102-2571

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SELFRIDGE FIELD,
BUILDING #178 (THEATER #2)
(Base Reproduction Plant)

HAER No. MI-116-S

Location: East of Wagner Street, south of George Avenue
Selfridge Air National Guard Base, Mt. Clemens vicinity,
Macomb County, Michigan
U.S.G.S. Mount Clemens East Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates: 17.350970.4718940

Significance: This building is representative of the facilities erected to serve the burgeoning base population as Selfridge grew to service its World War II training mission and served as a focus of recreational pursuits for base personnel.

Description: This building is a large, rectangular plan, concrete block building consisting of the primary shallow-pitch front-gabled unit shielded by a built up roof and a rear, single story, asphalt shingle covered shed roof unit. It rests on a concrete slab foundation and is shielded by a built up roof.

Its principal (west) elevation is the product of renovations undertaken in 1962. A projecting entry vestibule displays central steel and glass paired pedestrian entry door shielded by a shallow pitched gable-roofed canopy. This entrance is flanked by vertical fixed pane windows that form the axes of a decorative metal grid extending to the gabled roof that duplicates the pitch of both the main body of building and entrance canopy. Seven of the eight bays of the south elevation occur in the former theater portion of the building while the easternmost elevation occurs in the shed roof rear unit. The primary building's five bays are defined by pilasters with concrete coping and two bays of the entry vestibule created by a vertical fixed pane window and flanking steel pedestrian access door. Each of the bays of the main building is pierced by a fixed pane window or steel pedestrian access door, with a shed roof steel frame entry porch extending from the eastern portion of this elevation to shield primary entrances. The single bay of the shed roof unit is defined by an aluminum sash window. The rear (east) elevation consists of four bays defined by a central steel pedestrian entry door flanked by three aluminum sash windows. A square plan common bond brick smoke stack rises adjacent to the rear elevation. The north elevation is essentially identical to the south except that the shed roof porch is enclosed by concrete block and serves as a loading bay, and the

other bays between the pilasters are pierced by horizontal two pane sliding replacement windows.

The present interior plan that originally was composed of open audience seating has been divided into a number of functional work areas occupied by base reproduction services and the postal service. Most of the southern bays of the gabled portion of the building is occupied by a large reproduction area/press room. Utilitarian store rooms, furnace room, etc. occur to the east and occupy all of the shed roof bays. Postal service work areas, storeroom and loading dock occupy the northern gabled bays of the building and the postal service public service bays occupy the western part of the building. All areas display drop false ceilings and tile floors.

History:

Built in 1943 as "Theater #2," this theater was used by both black and white servicemen during the war, although events were "carefully" scheduled to ensure that the races attended separately. After the war, in 1949 Building #178 was converted to a post office, dry cleaning facility and storage area from plans provided by the Air Installations Office at Selfridge. It was extensively redesigned in 1962 to serve as the "Post Office Center" from designs of Edward M. Newman, Architect, of Detroit completed for the Air Force Air Defense Command. Its facade has been significantly modified through the addition of the entrance bay, its fenestration pattern has been extensively altered and no original interior fabric survives. Base reproduction facilities now occupy the former dry cleaning area.

Sources:

Anonymous, Brief History of Selfridge Air Force Base, 1917-1960, unpublished ms., Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, 1960.

Gropman, Alan L., The Air Force Integrates 1945-1964, Office of Air Force History, Washington, D.C., 1978.

Nigro, Louis, Selfridge Air National Guard Base, An Unofficial History, unpublished ms., Public Information Office, Selfridge ANG Base, Michigan, 1977.

Rose, Robert A., Double V: the Civil Rights Struggle of the Tuskegee Airmen, Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, 1976.

Selfridge Field News, "New Theater Opened to Meet Selfridge Demand for Motion Pictures," 17 July, 1943.

Interview, Captain Alexander Jefferson (ret.), Tuskegee Airman, August 16, 1995.

Interview, Eric Reeve, Selfridge Environmental Management, October 12, 1995.

Interview, Colonel Robert Stone (Ret.), Curator, Selfridge Base Museum, October 13, 1995.

Original plans on file, "Post Office Center, 740-633 Altr," 1962, completed for the Air Force Air Defense Command, on file at Selfridge Base Museum and Base Civil Engineers Office.

Original plans on file, "RPR Post Office Building," Edwin M. Newman, Architect, of Detroit, 1964, completed for the Air Force Air Defense Command, on file at Selfridge Base Museum and Base Civil Engineers Office.

Historian:

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